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Housekeepers' Chat

Thursday, March 13, 1930

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Ironing with a Professional Touch." Information from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Methods and Equipment for Home Laundering."

---ooOoo---

There are lots of letters in the question box today. The first one is from a young bride who wants to learn how to fold a man's shirt. You'll find that information in the laundry bulletin, along with illustrated directions for folding tablecloths, and so forth.

Let's take a few minutes to discuss ironing, in a professional way. Do you always iron with the thread of the goods, and iron until the garment is dry? Otherwise the goods will pucker.

Sometimes there's a shiny gloss, on hems, seams, and tucks of garments. Do you know how to remove this gloss? Moisten a piece of cheese-cloth with clear water, wring it dry, and wipe it quickly over the shiny surface.

Scorch stains, if they are slight, may be removed by moistening the fabric, and exposing it to strong sunlight. Of course, deeper scorch stains require bleaches.

A word about electric irons. By sad experience, I have learned that electric irons must be given good care, if they are to do good work. Watch the cord leading from the iron, and mend any breaks with insulating tape, while the current is turned off. When the ironing is finished, and the iron is cold, put it in a clean, dry place.

Clean your iron occasionally, by rubbing it with wax, or paraffin. When you iron, keep the iron hot enough. A cool iron is likely to leave a rust stain. With starched clothes, the iron must be hot enough to glaze the starch, otherwise the starch will stick, and discolor the fabric.

If you do not intend to use your iron for some time, grease the polished surface with lard, to keep it from rusting. In case the iron has rusted, scour it with scouring powder, and rub it well afterward with a flannel cloth.

Have I ever told you about my home-made folding ironing board? If I had room, I'd like to have a table for sheets and other flat pieces, a board for skirts and so forth, and a sleeve board. Since my one board must serve all purposes, I had it made fairly long and wide, with one narrow end. Tacked across this narrow end is a piece of tin, about eight inches



wide, for the iron to stand on. The neatest thing about this board is that it folds right into a little cupboard, out of the way.

I'm rather particular about my ironing board. It must be firmly padded, and covered with a clean white cloth. For padding, I use several thicknesses of an old blanket. Double-faced cotton flannel, the material used for silence cloths on dining tables, is also good. Some people use old sheets for the cover. I prefer new unbleached sheeting. It doesn't take much material, since the width of the sheeting makes the length of the cover. I made the cover myself, hemmed the edges, and sewed four pieces of tape firmly to each side. Some of the ready-made covers are laced together, through eyelets.

In the laundry bulletin there is a great deal of information about ironing, starching, washing, and so forth. It also includes plans for the folding ironing board.

To continue with the questions. The next is from a listener who asks about canaries. She has a brand new canary, and wants to know what to feed it. I'll read you this paragraph, from the canary bulletin:

"The food requirements of canaries are simple. Canary seed, to which have been added rape seed, and a little hemp, is a staple diet that can be purchased ready mixed. Canary seed, alone, does not furnish a balanced food, but forms a good combination, with hemp, and summer rape. Much of the rape seed in prepared seed, sold in cartons, is of a species that even wild birds do not eat, as it is pungent, and bitter in flavor, but all relish the mild taste of true summer rape.

"In addition to a seed supply, lettuce, or a bit of apple, should be placed between the wires of the cage frequently. And the menu may be varied by adding chickweed, dandelion heads, thistle and plantain seeds, and the fruiting heads and tender leaves of shepherd's purse. Watercress, wild oats, knot grass, and other grasses are relished, especially in spring and in summer.

"Bread moistened in scalded milk, given cold at intervals, is beneficial. Don't make soft foods too wet. With bread, add enough liquid to soften the food, but not make it runny, or pasty. Keep your supply of moist food strictly fresh, or sickness may result. Drinking water should be available at all times. Cuttle bone should always be available."

Another question is about the canary's bath. Let's see what the bulletin says about this:

"Birds brought into a strange place may refuse to bathe, for the first few days. When water is offered, they either ignore it, or sit on the perch and go through all the motions of bathing and drying, fluttering wings and tail with a great whirring of feathers. The bath should be offered whenever the cage is cleaned, and if left alone, the birds will take a bath after a few days.

"Under normal conditions, most birds probably bathe every day, and canaries in cages should be allowed the same opportunity. If the cage is

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an open wire one, remove the base, and place the cage over a small dish containing water.

"In open-front cages, in which the bottom is not detachable, small bath cages which fasten at the open door are used. These are only a few inches wide but serve to hold a dish for water. Many birds are notional in bathing and at times ignore the offered bath. Usually the process of cleaning the cage, and renewing the seed and water, will excite in them a desire for bathing, and often when a bath is not provided the bird will do its best to take a bath in the small supply of water in the drinking cup. When a bird obstinately refuses to enter the water, if enough clean sand to cover the bottom is placed in the dish he bathes more readily. After the bath the water is drained carefully and the sand left to dry in the dish for use another time."

By the way, this canary bulletin is a handy manual for everybody who owns a canary. I see it tells how to care for feet and bills, how to treat broken limbs and common diseases, and how to keep the cages clean. In case you're interested, the title of the bulletin is "Canaries -- Their Care and Management." It is free.

The next question is about bathroom fixtures, and what cleaner to use on them.

For porcelain and enameled iron fixtures, kerosene and whiting are especially good; the kerosene cuts the grease and the whiting does the scouring. Some of the commercial cleaning preparations used for enameled and porcelain fixtures are so gritty that they scratch the surface, and thus make it harder and harder to keep clean. Be very careful to select a cleaner which will not scratch the enamel. Tubes and bowls should be scrubbed with a fine scourer, or with water containing a little kerosene, rinsed with clear hot water, and wiped dry.

The stains made by water containing an excess of iron may be removed from porcelain or porcelain-lined bathtubs and bowls with a solution of oxalic acid. Oxalic acid is a poison, and must be entirely washed off. The overflow pipes should be flushed occasionally with hot water, for dirt and grease are likely to collect and decompose in the pipes.

The toilet bowl should be flushed, washed with hot soapsuds or soda solution and a long-handled brush, and flushed again. Then the seat, the cover, the chain, and the handles should be washed and wiped. All cloths and utensils used in cleaning the bathroom should be scalded and dried, preferably in the open air.

Tomorrow: "When the Breakfast Bell Rings." Please have plenty of note paper, for I have seven or eight memos to broadcast.

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